

## Flora of the Otway Plain & Ranges

### 2. Daisies, Heaths, Peas, Saltbushes, Sundews, Wattles and other shrubby and herbaceous Dicotyledons

by Enid Mayfield

*Publisher: CSIRO Publishing, Collingwood, Victoria, 2006.  
420 pages, paperback; colour illustrations. ISBN 9780643098060. RRP \$59.95*

This book completes the author's exhaustive coverage of the diverse native flora of the Otway Region. Like the first volume it is illustrated throughout with delicate colour drawings and occasional diagrams to clarify small critical floral parts. Apart from the two largest acacias, trees are not included.

The arrangement of the main text in alphabetical order of plant families is logical and informative, though there may be a few surprises for those who have not kept up with recent name changes. The author has worked closely with botanists at the National Herbarium of Victoria to ensure that the text is as up to date as possible. Access to dried material and specialist literature has enabled the inclusion of some elusive species. Above all, the author is no armchair botanist: she has travelled widely in the area and her understanding and dedication to the environment is evident throughout the book.

The opening pages include acknowledgements, a foreword by Professor David Cantrill, (then Chief Botanist at the National Herbarium), and two important pages on how to use the book.

The section titled 'Quick plant finder' is useful only if one knows either a common name for the plant or its family or genus. This brings me to the one small concern I have about the book. Unless a register of common names can be agreed on, published and kept up to date, their use is better discouraged. Coining of new common names is unnecessary, and can lead to duplication and confusion. Common names new to me occur throughout the book but I could find no reference cited for their use.

On page 4 there is a discrepancy and error in the listing of the botanical and common names of *Olearia argophylla* and *O. erubescens*. This



is corrected in the main text and is probably a proof-reading error of which the book is otherwise remarkably free.

The sections of the book are not numbered as chapters. Coloured page margins distinguish the early ones from the white pages of the main section beginning on page 36. For identification of an unknown plant the two sections, 'Characteristics of Families' and 'Characteristics of Dicotyledons', are a good start, with clear small drawings and notes about habit and habitat.

In the main section, families are listed in alphabetical order, the larger ones accompanied by general notes and several illustrations. Each genus has individual notes. Full species name

and author are given, together with the meaning of the Latin name or a biographical note if named after a person. Descriptions are well expressed in simple botanical language. Distribution is given by Otway region, Australian States other than Victoria, and overseas, if applicable. The final pages, again with coloured margins, include an excellent illustrated glossary, a long list of literature references and a comprehensive index.

The book is greatly enriched by the inclusion of an interesting variety of notes and drawings of associated small wildlife such as butterflies, a sand snail and the Mistletoebird. Distinctive pollination methods are described. Although

this is a scholarly work, it is expressed in concise, simple language, and is a tribute to the author's knowledge and concern for the preservation of her environment.

As a field guide for identification of species the book works well, once one has taken a little time to understand the layout. It is a delight to read, if only for enjoyment of the illustrations and appreciation of all the extra little snippets of information scattered throughout.

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## Snarls from the Tea-tree Big Cat Folklore

by David Waldron and Simon Townsend

Publisher: *Arcadia - Australian Scholarly Publishing, North Melbourne, 2012. 190 pages, paperback. ISBN:978-1-921875-83-0. RRP \$34.95*

For many years there have been reports of mysterious animals in the Australian bush. These include mythical creatures such as the bunyip and yarrie, but also supposedly extinct marsupial carnivores—the Thylacine and the Marsupial Lion. A third group of animals reported from unusual prey kills, footprints and sightings comprise panthers and other 'big cats'. Lobbying of politicians resulted in the somewhat surprising announcement by the newly elected Coalition Government in Victoria to honour an election pledge presumably to rural constituents, to order that a desk-top study be undertaken to evaluate the evidence for big cat presence in Victoria. Not surprisingly, the report found there was no irrefutable evidence in favour of panthers or the like in Victoria; of course this is hardly unexpected—after all, how do you prove a species is NOT present? The report did, however, document sufficient unexplained observations to whet the appetite of big cat proponents and cryptozoologists alike!

The book is interesting in that it does not come out stridently in favour of one outcome or the other. Instead, it is presented in two parts—the first by David Waldron, a researcher from the University of Ballarat who specialises in the interconnection between history and anthropology and who is interested in folklore and the development of myths. In essence, Waldron's chapters explore the historical context of big cat sightings and provide plausible explanations for the development of the myths that surround this topic—and how they have been reported (or misreported) in local media. The second component is written by Simon Townsend and it essentially documents the cases for big cat reports.

The book is very readable and contains some interesting stories. The most famous might be about the Tantanoola Tiger, which apparently caused panic in south-east South Australia through savage stock killings over four years from 1892. Settlers blamed a tiger that had perhaps escaped from a zoo, others an Assyrian